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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S CARSON

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - POTENTIAL SECURITY RISKS AT DADAAB

REFUGEE CAMP

Classified By: Pol Counselor Bob Patterson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: Dadaab Refugee Camp complex, made up of three camps, located about 48 miles from the Kenya-Somalia border, houses over 290,000 refugees - primarily Somalis - and is growing daily. The camp was built for 50,000. While no hotbed of extremism, the camps' large pool of idle youth has allegedly already provided a few recruits for al-Shabaab, and Dadaab reportedly served as a meeting ground for Somali extremists in March. Greater U.S. engagement with the Government of Kenya to allow the humanitarian community to improve the lives of refugees, reduce possibilities for al-Qaida or al-Shabaab recruitment, and help prepare the refugees for return, could lessen the potential appeal of extremism. What follows are observations from a June 3 visit by S/CT and other State officers, and Embassy Nairobi's A/RSO. End Summary.

Camp Security

12. (SBU) Security in the camps appears generally good, though banditry and violence associated with clan conflict have meant that for years now aid workers must stay in a secure compound at night and observe curfews. The International Rescue Committee, which runs the camp's hospital, reported that medical personnel usually see about one violence-related injury per day - quite low considering the sizable camp population. Kenyan police stationed at the camp claimed that these incidents usually involve individuals fighting over resources - such as access to a water tap or suspicions of thievery - and that individual incidents were not drawing larger family or clan groups into conflict. While the police-per-person ratio is judged by USG officers to be very low - about one per 13,000 - police reinforcements can be called in from nearby. Another NGO, the Lutheran World Service, had trained 70 "Community Policing and Security Teams" (CPST) - camp volunteers who were trained and partially equipped with uniform vests, flashlights, and a few bicycles - to patrol the camp. The CPSTs explain camp rules to new residents, and inform the police of any serious incidents. Both camp residents and the police agreed that violent crime, typically assault and rape, had decreased over the spring months, though they disagreed over the cause. Camp residents credited community policing and mediation by camp elders. One community leader, a woman, mentioned that recent violence had been directed toward families who opposed female genital mutilation.

Warning Signs of Potential Security Risk

13. (S//NF) The camp has recently been affected by the ongoing fighting in Somalia, and reportedly has been and could continue to be exploited by violent criminals. CPST members confirmed cases of armed strangers appearing in the camp, and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that a handful of youth from the Dadaab refugee camp had been recruited by al-Shabaab to fight in Somalia in March. A UNHCR security officer also speculated that the reported deaths of some of these recruits would dampen enthusiasm in any subsequent would-be fighters. When asked about their top priority, camp elders called for a focus on new employment opportunities for idle youth in the camp. The majority of the refugees receive little or no education, although youth can, in theory, receive up to a secondary school education in the camp. Most refugees are barred from living elsewhere in Kenya or working outside the camp - and job opportunities are scarce in Dadaab. Separate reporting indicates that al-Shabaab offers signing bonuses to new recruits, a potential draw for Dadaab's youth.

14. (S//REL UK) On at least one occasion, the camp has also served as a neutral meeting ground for ethnic Somali fighters. A UNHCR security officer privately reported that representatives of Raas Kamboni leader Hassan al-Turki, a designated terrorist and ally of al-Shabaab, had recently met in the camp with representatives from the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) to resolve differences. (COMMENT: The USG has no confirmation of this meeting in

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any other reporting channels. END COMMENT.)

Refugee Screening Measures...and Gaps

15. (SBU) Kenya's border with Somalia remains formally closed but extremely porous. Refugees stream across it every day, creating a market for human smugglers who make an already porous border even more difficult to control. The Kenyan police expressed hope that the Liboi refugee reception center would soon be open, but had no concrete information that it would reopen. The GOK reopened Liboi for a while in 2008 and then closed it again as it could not find a way to reconcile the two notions of the border being closed but a reception center being open. Both the Kenyan police and UNHCR's security office agreed that screening protocols, both security and medical, needed to be improved if Liboi were reopened (NOTE: The USG supports reopening of Liboi, or some alternative reception/intake center. END NOTE). UNHCR plans to negotiate with the Kenyan government on this topic after it obtains agreement on increasing land allotments.

16. (SBU) Intake processing measures currently in place in Dadaab could be potentially exploited by terrorists, though there is no evidence of this to date. There are no controls on entering one of the three sprawling camps in Dadaab, but without a refugee ID aid organizations will not provide food, shelter, and medical assistance. Up to 500 new refugees are processed per day, though some must wait days or even weeks before processing. At screening, UNHCR collects fingerprints, a facial image, name, date of birth, clan affiliation, and home town; the Kenyan government then manually collects fingerprints and biographic information) but the two do not share information. UNHCR's computerized registration is confidential for the residents' safety. Kenyan officials send the prints to the Immigration Ministry in Nairobi, which screens them for fraudulent attempts by Kenyan citizens to qualify for refugee assistance and to prevent Somali refugees from obtaining Kenyan passports. Neither ID nor other proof of identity is required during processing; indeed most asylum-seekers

do not have documentation given the circumstances of their flight, which could enable a terrorist to acquire a false identity as a refugee.

Dadaab Refugees and the Peace Process

¶7. (U) UNHCR Security Officer Terrence Pike opined that Somali refugees in Dadaab should play a more formal role in the Somalia peace process. Political exiles from multiple factions, including former government ministers, now reside in Dadaab, and the camp itself is a model of peaceful clan relations that could help inspire fresh attitudes in Somalia. He noted that one of UN Special Representative of the Secretary General Ould-Abdullah,s deputies planned to visit Dadaab. UNHCR is generally opposes political engagement in the camps, although off the record, Pike personally urged the USG to advocate for and support a role for Dadaab,s communities in the peace process because political engagement would further stabilize the situation in the camp and benefit Somalia.

¶8. (S) COMMENT: Though overall security conditions in the camp appear generally good despite extreme overcrowding, and al-Shabaab efforts have yielded only a small number of recruits, Dadaab retains some potential for extremist exploitation. The USG could consider steps to further limit the potential for terrorist exploitation of Somali refugees in Kenya. For example, once Kenya,s TIP-PISCES system is equipped with a biometric capability, encouraging the Kenyan government to cross-check refugee prints with its TIP-PISCES system might catch terrorists posing as refugees. Since payments that Somalis make to smugglers to transport them to the border include help in getting across, reopening Kenya,s refugee screening center at Liboi might direct the refugee flows away from smugglers, which could result in fewer smuggling rings for security services to track. Finally, supporting a role for Dadaab refugees in the Somali peace process could help foster peace in Somalia that, if realized, might someday permit

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them to go home. END COMMENT.
RANNEBERGER